

Message Text

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PAGE 01 OTTAWA 03981 062217Z

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TO SECSTATE WASHDC 5156

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TAGS EFIS CA UR

SUBJ FISHING; SOVIETS AGREE TO NEGOTIATE CLAIMS

BY CANADIAN LOBSTER FISHERMEN

1. FOLLOWING IS TEXT OF ENVIRONMENT CANADA NEWS RELEASE OF NOVEMBER 28 CONCERNING SOVIET AGREEMENT TO NEGOTIATE CLAIMS BY LOBSTER FISHERMEN: BEGIN TEXT. THE WAY HAS BEEN CLEARED FOR CANADIAN EAST COAST LOBSTER FISHERMEN TO NEGOTIATE GEAR DAMAGE CLAIMS WITH SOVIET AUTHORITIES, FISHERIES MINISTER ROMEO LEBLANC ANNOUNCED TODAY.

CANADIAN OFFICIALS MET WITH OFFICIALS OF THE SOVIET UNION IN OTTAWA ON NOVEMBER 21 THROUGH 25 TO DISCUSS CERTAIN FISHERIES PROBLEMS OF CONCERN TO BOTH COUNTRIES. THE MEETING DEALT WITH OUTSTANDING CLAIMS FOR PAST DAMAGES CAUSED TO LOBSTER GEAR BELONGING TO CANADIAN FISHERMEN, AND THE ESTABLISHMENT OF PREVENTIVE MEASURES TO AVOID FURTHER INCIDENTS.

THE FOLLOWING JOINT COMMUNIQUE WAS ISSUED FOLLOWING THE MEETING: "ON THE QUESTION OF THE OUTSTANDING CLAIMS IT WAS AGREED THAT THE SOVIET AGENCY, SOVRYBFLOT, WHICH UNCLASSIFIED

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PAGE 02 OTTAWA 03981 062217Z

REPRESENTS THE INTERESTS OF THE OWNERS OF THE SOVIET

FISHING VESSELS, WILL STUDY THE EVIDENCE WHICH HAS BEEN SUBMITTED ON AN URGENT BASIS, OBTAIN SUCH CLARIFICATIONS AS MAY BE NECESSARY, AND IN NECESSARY CASES WILL MEET AND NEGOTIATE WITH THE CANADIAN CLAIMANTS. THE APPROPRIATE AGENCIES OF THE TWO COUNTRIES HAVE UNDERTAKEN TO ENCOURAGE THE SPEEDY AND EQUITABLE SETTLEMENT OF CLAIMS.

"ON PREVENTIVE MEASURES TO AVOID FURTHER INCIDENTS, AGREEMENT WAS REACHED ON THE IMPLEMENTATION OF A DETAILED GEAR MARKING SCHEME AND ON AN IMPROVED SYSTEM OF COMMUNICATING THE LOCATION OF CANADIAN LOBSTER GEAR TO SOVIET FISHING VESSELS."

MR LEBLANC STATED THAT ALTHOUGH HE WAS HOPEFUL THAT THE CLAIMS COULD BE SETTLED SATISFACTORILY THROUGH SUCH NEGOTIATIONS, THE CLAIMANTS WILL STILL RETAIN THEIR RIGHT TO PROSECUTE THEIR CLAIMS THROUGH CANADIAN COURTS.

THE MINISTER ADDED THAT LEGISLATION, IN THE FORM OF A MARITIME CODE, WILL BE RE-INTRODUCED IN THE HOUSE OF COMMONS IN THE NEAR FUTURE. THIS LEGISLATION WILL INCLUDE PROVISION FOR "SISTER SHIP ARREST", ALLOWING CANADIAN CLAIMANTS TO INSTITUTE PROCEEDINGS AGAINST VESSELS OF THE SOVIET FLEET OTHER THAN THE ACTUAL ALLEGED OFFENDERS, WHEN THEY ENTER PORT.

"WITH THIS LEGISLATION, CANADIAN FISHERMEN WILL HAVE ALTERNATIVE MEANS OF PRESSING SUCH DAMAGE CLAIMS" MR LEBLANC STATED. END TEXT.

2. ACTION REQUESTED: IN ORDER TO RESPOND TO INQUIRY BY LOCAL NEWSWEEK CORRESPONDENT SPARKED BY ABOVE ANNOUNCEMENT, PLEASE ADVISE EMBASSY IF USG HAS ANY SIMILAR ARRANGEMENTS WITH USSR FOR HANDLING DAMAGE CLAIMS BY U.S. LOBSTER FISHERMEN.
JOHNSON

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